

## Fisheries Management Update

Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit  
Fisheries Division

The Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit covers the Grand, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Galien river watersheds and all the lakes and streams within that area. Each year, fisheries biologists evaluate management options on various water bodies in order to achieve increased fishery benefits.

Following is a list by county of management actions that have occurred over the past year and a list of waters that we intend to survey in 2005.

We also invite anglers to provide us feedback on specific management options. Contact Jay Wesley at (269) 685-6851 or at the Plainwell Operations Service Center, Plainwell, Michigan.

### Allegan County

The department will continue to stock brown trout into **Bear Creek** and walleye into the lower **Kalamazoo River**. Recent surveys have indicated that there is not enough natural reproduction to sustain these populations. Northern pike stocking will be discontinued in **Hutchins Lake**. The lake has a good population of northern pike now, and there appears to be sufficient spawning habitat for the population to continue. Northern pike are a difficult fish to produce in a hatchery system, so the DNR is concentrating future pike management on habitat protection and restoration. A creel survey is scheduled for the **Port of Holland** to collect information on Great Lakes species. The DNR is also conducting a comprehensive fish and habitat survey on **Silver Creek** in Gun Plain Township. Purdue University will be sampling the mouth of the **Kalamazoo River** in Saugatuck for Lake Sturgeon during March and April.

### Barry County

**Highbanks Creek** will continue to be stocked with brown trout. The strain was changed from seeforellen to Gilchrist Creek. Northern pike stocking will be discontinued in **Hall Lake** due to a decline in egg take collections in southern Michigan. The lake should continue to produce a good panfish fishery. Plans to create a walleye fishery in **Pleasant Lake** have been put on hold until the state can secure public access to the lake. A 2003 survey of **Lower Crooked Lake** showed a good self-sustaining fishery despite periodic winter kills. Muskellunge stocking for this lake was discontinued and moved to better suited lakes in the state. Walleye stocking was discontinued in **Bristol Lake** after a 2002 survey indicated no survival and no angler reports of catching walleye. The survey indicated a good largemouth bass and northern pike fishery for anglers to target. **Long Lake** in Cloverdale will be sampled early this spring to evaluate the northern pike fishery. Several surveys are planned on **Thornapple River** tributaries for use in the Grand River assessment. Crews will be on **Thornapple Lake** early this spring as part of the annual northern muskellunge egg take.

### Berrien County

The **St. Joseph River** will continue to be stocked with walleye on an alternate year basis. These fish will be marked so the DNR can evaluate natural reproduction, year class strength, and percent contribution of stocked walleye to the creel. Walleye will continue to be stocked in the **Galien River** in New Buffalo. Anglers continue to report good fall and spring fishing at the river mouth. **McCoy Creek** will continue to be stocked with brown trout. The City of Buchanan along with the St. Joseph River Valley Fly Fishers has made significant habitat improvements to the lower segments of McCoy Creek. The **Dowagiac River** will also continue to receive brown trout stocking. Fish community surveys are scheduled this summer for **Singer Lake** and **Townsend Creek**. Boom-shocking will occur on the **St. Joseph River** in various

locations to evaluate the walleye stocking program. Creel surveys are planned for the **St. Joseph River**, the **Port of New Buffalo**, the **Port of St. Joseph**, and **Paw Paw Lake**.

#### **Branch County**

**Cary Lake** is stocked with rainbow trout annually. DNR is looking for information from anglers on the trout fishery to determine if stocking should continue. A comprehensive habitat and fish community survey is scheduled for the **St. Joseph River** in July.

#### **Calhoun County**

The Calhoun County Conservation District has been active restoring rivers in this area. The Elm Street Dam on the **Battle Creek River** in Battle Creek was partially removed last year and is expected to be finished this spring. **Rice Creek** will soon be reconnected to the **Kalamazoo River** after the Marshall Dam in the City of Marshall is removed. An Inland Fisheries Grant was awarded to remove this unsafe dam. The **Battle Creek River** will be surveyed this summer near the City of Battle Creek to evaluate the smallmouth bass population.

#### **Cass County**

**Birch Lake** rainbow trout stocking has been discontinued to eliminate competition with lake herring (cisco), a state threatened species. **Hemlock Lake** will continue to be stocked with trout. **Dowagiac River** and **Creek** will continue to be stocked with brown trout. Some habitat improvement work will be conducted to prevent bank erosion near Sink Road on the Dowagiac River. **Fish Lake** will continue to be stocked with walleye after angler reports and a 2002 survey indicated a good fishery. A netting survey will be conducted on **Belas Lake** this spring.

#### **Clinton County**

Channel catfish will continue to be stocked in **Park Lake** to help control the stunted bluegill problem. A 2004 fish community survey indicated that bluegill growth has increased since the introduction of channel catfish. **Lake Ovid** will also continue to be stocked with channel catfish and muskellunge to control panfish stunting in this highly productive system and to create a large predator fishery. A habitat survey is also scheduled for Lake Ovid for late summer.

#### **Eaton County**

Moore's Park Impoundment on the **Grand River** will continue to receive walleye stocking. The 2004 survey indicated good survival. Walleye stocking will be discontinued in **Lake Delta**, and the lake will continue to receive channel catfish. **Lake Interstate** stocking of channel catfish will continue and rainbow trout stocking was discontinued. Fish surveys and lack of angler reports indicate poor survival of the trout. The Village of Dimondale was awarded an Inland Fisheries Grant to remove their dam on the **Grand River**. Charlotte also received a grant to remove their dam on the **Battle Creek River**. The Eaton County Drain Commissioner and DNR have teamed up to create a rock ramp or riffle to allow fish passage into **Narrow Lake**. Currently, the lake level control structure does not allow fish like northern pike to access the lake for spawning. Several tributaries to the Grand River will be surveyed this year. The data will be used in the Grand River assessment.

#### **Gratiot County**

No management updates for the Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit.

#### **Hillsdale County**

No management updates for the Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit.

### Ingham County

Various tributaries to the **Grand River** will be surveyed for the Grand River assessment.

### Ionia County

Walleye stocking will continue on **Woodard Lake** to control the stunted bluegill problem. Anglers are reminded that there is a zero possession limit regulation for walleye on this lake. **Woodard Lake** is scheduled to be surveyed again this summer. Fry stocking of walleye will continue in the **Grand River**.

### Jackson County

No management updates for the Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit.

### Kalamazoo County

**Augusta Creek** will continue to be stocked with brown trout. The strain will be changed to Gilchrist Creek. Fisheries Division has just completed a draft Kalamazoo River assessment. This document will receive public comment through July of 2005. **Gourdneck Lake** will be sampled with nets this spring to evaluate the fish community.

### Kent County

**Tyler Creek** and **Duck Creek** will be stocked with brown trout, and the strain has been changed to Gilchrist Creek for both streams. The zero possession limit regulation for walleye and stocking of walleye will remain for **Long Lake** to help control stunted bluegills. Walleye stocking will continue for the **Grand River**. The **Rogue River** Parking Area was completed last year and is open for angler use. **Murray** and **Campau** lakes will be creel surveyed to evaluate angler catch and harvest. These lakes will also have fish community surveys conducted on them along with **Campbell Lake**. The **Rogue River**, **Spring Brook**, and **Bear Creek** will all be surveyed to evaluate their coldwater fisheries.

### Montcalm County

The **Flat River** and tributaries will be surveyed for the Grand River assessment.

### Ottawa County

The walleye fishery in the lower **Grand River** should continue to flourish with continued walleye fry plants near Grand Rapids. **Spring Lake** is scheduled to have a comprehensive fish and habitat survey this spring and summer.

### St. Joseph County

The **St. Joseph River**, **Palmer** and **Sturgeon** lakes will continue to be stocked with walleye on an alternate year basis. These fish will be marked so the DNR can evaluate natural reproduction, year class strength, and percent contribution of stocked walleye to the creel. Brown trout stockings were moved on the **Nottawa River**. The Old 27 and Oak Grove sites were moved to the 6 Mile section.

### Van Buren County

Northern pike stocking was discontinued in **Rush**, **Van Auken** and **Three Legged lakes**. Pike are difficult to mass produce in our current hatchery system. Therefore, Fisheries Division will concentrate its management on promoting natural reproduction through the protection and rehabilitation of spawning (wetland) habitats. The **South Branch Paw Paw River** and **Pine Creek** will continue to receive brown trout. Portions of the Pine Creek stockings near Mentha were moved down to 101<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Allegan

County. Three Legged Lake will be surveyed to evaluate the pike population this spring. **Campbell Creek** will also be surveyed to evaluate the trout fishery. **Upper Jephtha Lake** is scheduled for a comprehensive habitat and fish community survey.